

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

BRASILIA AND CARACAS FOR AMB WOLFF

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, EFIN, MTN, MX

SUBJECT: U.S.-MEXICO CONSULTATIVE MECHANISM: ECONOMIC

WORKING GROUP SESSION, MAY 4

1. SUMMARY INTRODUCTION: AS WAS ANTICIPATED, THE ECONOMIC WORKING GROUP FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO COVER IN DETAIL IN TWO HOURS ALL FOUR PRINCIPAL AGENDA ITEMS OF ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ISSUES, TRADE, TOURISM AND MULTILATERAL ISSUES AND NUMEROUS SUB-ITEMS. AS DISCUSSIONS DID NOT ADHERE CLOSELY TO AGENDA ITEMS, U.S. SIDE ARRANGED BRING UP MOST IMPORTANT POINTS. BY PRIOR AGREEMENT OF CO-CHAIRMEN, LARGE PORTION OF TIME WAS SPENT ON STATE OF ECONOMIES OF U.S. AND MEXICO, INVESTMENT AND TRADE ISSUES. IN SHORT PLENARY MEETING FOLLOWING MORNING MEETING OF ECONOMIC WORKING GROUP CO-CHAIRMEN GAVE BRIEF REPORT OF THEIR DISCUSSIONS. GROUP HAD UNSCHEDULED AFTERNOON MEETING PRIMARILY TO DISCUSS
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TOURIST ISSUES, BUT WHICH ALSO INCLUDED USEFUL EXCHANGE ON COMMON FUND (UNDER MULTILATERAL ISSUES). END SUMMARY.

2. STATE OF U.S. AND MEXICAN ECONOMIES: A. SIDE BEGAN DISCUSSION BY DESCRIBING RECENT PERFORMANCE AND PLANS FOR THE U.S. ECONOMY. NOTE WAS MADE OF U.S. EMERGENCE FROM 1974-75 RECESSION AND RECENT GROWTH RATE WAS DES-

CRIBED AS WELL ABOVE LONG-RUN SUSTAINABLE LEVELS OF 3.5 PERCENT. USG POLICY OF TRYING TO ACHIEVE A DECLINING GROWTH RATE WAS AIMED AT EASING CURRENT HIGH RATES OF UNEMPLOYMENT WHILE LEADING TO A "SOFT LANDING" SEVERAL YEARS HENCE CHARACTERIZED BY RELATIVELY LOW RATES OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND INFLATION COUPLED WITH A SUSTAINABLE RATE OF GROWTH. NONETHELESS THERE WAS CONCERN THAT THE ECONOMY NOW SEEMED TO HAVE DEVELOPED A BASIC 6 PERCENT RATE OF INFLATION WHICH VARIED DEPENDING ON FOOD PRICES. THE U.S. DELEGATION POINTED TO AN IMPROVING TREND IN THE U.S. CURRENT ACCOUNT NOTING THAT PROGRESS WAS SLOWED BY CONTINUED HEAVY U.S. ENERGY IMPORTS AND A RELATIVELY SLOW RATE OF WORLD ECONOMIC RECOVERY COMPARED TO THAT OF THE U.S. HOWEVER, BETTER RATES OF GROWTH WERE EXPECTED SOON FOR WESTERN EUROPE, JAPAN AND MOST OF THE DEVELOPING NATIONS; WITH CORRESPONDING IMPROVEMENTS IN THE U.S. CURRENT ACCOUNT AND EXCHANGE VALUE OF THE DOLLAR. USG POLICY REGARDING THE DOLLAR'S EXCHANGE RATE WOULD REMAIN ONE OF BASIC NONINTERVENTION. THE U.S. WAS COMMITTED TO THE SYSTEM OF RELATIVELY FLEXIBLE EXCHANGE RATES SET BY MARKET SUPPLY AND DEMAND FORCES AS LEADING TO MORE EFFICIENT USE OF RESOURCES. IN LOOKING AT RECENT CHANGES IN THE DOLLAR'S VALUE ONE SHOULD FOCUS ON THE FUNDAMENTALS, OR REAL FORCES AFFECTING THE ECONOMY. INTERVENTION IN EXCHANGE MARKETS CANNOT AFFECT THESE FORCES. FOR THE U.S. IN THE FUTURE THE FUNDAMENTALS LOOKED GOOD.

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B. THE MEXICAN SIDE EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN THE CONTINUED GROWTH OF MEXICO'S ECONOMY AND SOUNDNESS OF THE POLICIES FOLLOWED SINCE THE 1976 DEVALUATION. MEXICO TOO WAS EMERGING FROM RECESSION AND THE HIGH SOCIAL COSTS OF LOW GROWTH IN COUNTRIES WITH RAPIDLY INCREASING POPULATIONS WAS NOTED. HIGH RATES OF ECONOMIC GROWTH WERE PREDICTED FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS LED BY THE MINING, PETROCHEMICAL AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRIES. AGRICULTURE, WHICH HAS RECENTLY SHOWN SOME SIGNS OF GROWTH, WOULD ALSO BE PUSHED. GROWTH RATES OF 6.5 PERCENT ARE POSSIBLE BY END OF 1978, OVER 7 PERCENT IN 1979, AND COULD REACH 10 PERCENT BY 1980, DEPENDING PRIMARILY ON PRIVATE INVESTMENT. MEXICO HAD HAD CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS IN COMBATING INFLATION; IT WAS DOWN FROM 27 PERCENT IN 1977 TO AN EXPECTED 18 PERCENT IN 1978. PETROLEUM EXPORTS WOULD REDUCE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS ON MEXICO'S DEVELOPMENT. NEVERTHELESS, MEXICO'S CURRENT ACCOUNT DEFICIT COULD NOT MUCH IMPROVE AS GROWTH INCREASED; NOR WOULD INFLATION AGAIN REACH THE LOW RATES OF THE 60'S OR EARLY 70'S, AT LEAST IN THE MEDIUM TERM. IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS IMPORTS OF CAPITAL GOODS WERE GROWING QUICKLY, SHOWING THAT DOMESTIC INVEST-

MENT WAS PICKING UP AS ECONOMY EXPANDED.

C. IN REPLY TO MEXICAN QUESTIONS ON WORLD TRENDS ON DEV-
ELOPMENT AND PROTECTIONIST TRADE POLICIES, THE U.S. SIDE
EXPLAINED THAT USG POLICY HAS ALWAYS AIMED AT ENCOURAGING
FREE INTERNATIONAL MARKETS. PROTECTIONISM HAS GROWN OUT
OF HIGH RATES OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE INDUSTRIALIZED
COUNTRIES AND THE BEST MEANS OF FIGHTING THESE PRESSURES
WERE PROGRAMS TO STIMULATE GROWTH, INCREASE EMPLOYMENT, AND
NEGOTIATIONS REDUCING TRADE BARRIERS. THE LATTER TOOK THE
INITIATIVE AWAY FROM PROTECTIONIST FORCES. PRESIDENT
CARTER HAD TURNED DOWN MANY REQUESTS FOR SPECIAL PRO-
TECTIONIST MEASURES AS NEITHER IN THE INTEREST OF THE
U.S. OR THAT OF THE REST OF THE WORLD. THERE WAS FUNDA-
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MENTAL CONCURRENCE OF VIEWS ON MONETARY POLICY WITHIN THE
U.S. GOVERNMENT. NO ATTEMPT WOULD BE MADE TO TALK UP OR
DOWN THE EXCHANGE RATE. ACTUALLY OVERALL THE DOLLAR ON A
TRADE WEIGHTED BASIS HAD DECLINED VERY LITTLE SINCE 1974,
HOWEVER THE FINANCIAL PRESS WAS MAKING MUCH OF ITS DECLINE
WITH REFERENCE TO THE CURRENCIES OF A FEW MAJOR INDUSTRIAL

NATIONS. AS LONG AS THE OPEC COUNTRIES RAN HIGH CURRENT ACCOUNT SURPLUSES SOMEBODY, PRESUMABLY THE U.S., HAD TO SHOW CORRESPONDING DEFICITS.

D. THE U.S. DELEGATION ASKED THE MEXICANS TO EXPLAIN PRESIDENT JLP'S "EMPLOYMENT FUND" AND TO GIVE A TIMETABLE FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION; THE U.S. WAS CONCERNED BY THE LAG OF EMPLOYMENT IN RELATION TO ECONOMIC GROWTH. CONCERN WAS ALSO EXPRESSED OVER THE IMPACT ON PRIVATE INVESTMENT - ESPECIALLY FOREIGN INVESTMENT - OF SUCH RECENT MEXICAN LEGISLATION AS THE NEW REGULATIONS ON PATENTS AND TRADEMARKS AND THE AUTO DECREES.

E. THE MEXICAN DELEGATION EXPLAINED THAT THE "EMPLOYMENT FUND" HAD THREE BASIC PURPOSES: (1) TO FOSTER DIRECTLY UNCLASSIFIED

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DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODERN SECTOR OF THE ECONOMY AND HENCE ENLARGE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES. (2) TO DEVELOP INFRASTRUCTURE TO AID INDIRECTLY THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODERN SECTOR. (3) TO IMPROVE LIVING CONDITIONS IN THE TRADITIONAL SECTOR. IN ATTAINING THESE GOALS DEVELOPMENT OF FOOD PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION, ENERGY RELATED INDUSTRIES, AND CAPITAL GOODS INDUSTRIES WOULD BE STRESSED. THE FUND WOULD ENABLE MEXICO TO MORE EVENLY DISTRIBUTE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY THE BENEFITS COMING FROM PETROLEUM EXPORTS. BY 1982 IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO REDUCE THE "OPEN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE" BY HALF.

F. IN REPLY TO THE OTHER QUESTIONS, THE MEXICAN SIDE FELT THAT THESE TOPICS HAD BEEN AIRED FULLY AT THE NOVEMBER MEETING BUT ADDED THAT THE AUTO DECREE WAS NOT NEW REGULATION BUT RATHER A SYSTEMIZATION OF EXISTING PRACTICE. MEXICO HAD A SUBSTANTIAL DEFICIT IN AUTOMOTIVE TRADE, PARTICULARLY IN PARTS. MEXICO DID NOT CONSIDER DISCRIMINATORY THE PROVISIONS OF THE AUTO DECREE COVERING FOREIGN EXCHANGE CREDIT FOR ROYALTIES AND PROFIT REPATRIATION. THE MEXICAN SPOKESMAN ON THIS ISSUE (WARMAN) WAS NOT SURE THE AUTOMOTIVE DECREE WAS A PROPER TOPIC FOR DISCUSSION. FURTHERMORE, RECENT USG AUTO REGULATIONS WOULD HAVE A SEVERE DEPRESSIVE IMPACT ON THE MEXICAN INDUSTRY. THE MEXICANS ADMITTED THAT PRIVATE INVESTMENT HAD FALLEN CONSIDERABLY DURING THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS, MUCH MORE DOMESTICALLY THAN FOREIGN. BUT THIS IMPLIED THAT THE CLIMATE FOR FOREIGN INVESTMENT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MUCH AFFECTED BY MEXICAN POLICIES.

3. TRADE: A. IN AREA OF GENERAL TRADE POLICY, U.S. DELEGATION SAID U.S. GROUPS AFFECTED BY FOREIGN TRADE MEASURES WERE ASKING FOR "FAIR TRADE." THE USG WOULD HAVE

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TO BE RESPONSIVE TO TRADE SUBSIDIZED BY FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS, E.G. U.K DISTRESS SALES OF STEEL; OR FORCED EXPORTS BY GOVERNMENT POLICIES, E.G. POSSIBLE AUTO EXPORTS FORCED BY MEXICAN AUTO DECREES. THIS WAS ONE OF THE MOST WORRISOME ASPECTS OF THE MEXICAN AUTO DECREES AND THE U.S. WANTED MEXICO TO BE WELL AWARE OF IT. AS COUNTRIES PARTICIPATED MORE IN THE WORLD TRADE THEY HAD TO BECOME MORE CONSCIOUS OF THE FOREIGN IMPLICATIONS OF THEIR DOMESTIC POLICIES. ECONOMIC POLICIES WHICH AFFECTED BOTH COUNTRIES THROUGH TRADE OR OTHERWISE WERE FIT SUBJECTS FOR THE ECONOMIC WORKING GROUP OF THE MECHANISM. GENERALLY SPEAKING, THERE WAS LESS PROTECTIONISM IN THE U.S. THAN IN EUROPE BUT ALL COUNTRIES MUST WORK AGAINST INTERNAL PROTECTIONIST PRESSURES. THE MTN WAS A MAJOR EFFORT, AND MEXICAN PARTICIPATION IN IT AND SUITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO IT, ALONG WITH RATIFICATION OF THE U.S.-MEXICO BILATERAL TRADE AGREEMENT WOULD CONTINUE THE MOMENTUM. MEXICAN VIEWS ON TRADE WERE SOLICITED.

B. THE MEXICAN DELEGATION NOTED THAT DESPITE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN SUCH AREAS AS INFLATION AND THE COMPLETION, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE CAPITAL GOODS SECTOR, OF ITS IMPORT SUBSTITUTION PROGRAM MEXICO'S CURRENT ACCOUNT DEFICIT WORSENERD DURING THE FINAL MONTH OF 1977 SIGNALING CONTINUED TRADE PROBLEMS FOR 1978. THE MEXICANS SUGGESTED PART OF THE PROBLEM WAS DOMESTIC BOTTLENECKS IN SUCH AREAS AS THE PRODUCTION OF CEMENT AND THE FAILURE OF EXPORT GROWTH IN AREAS OTHER THAN PETROLEUM. TO SOME EXTENT THE MEXICAN ECONOMY NOW WAS PAYING THE PRICE FOR LACK OF PRIVATE INVESTMENT OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS. HOWEVER, MEXICAN GOODS WERE BY AND LARGE COMPETITIVE ON WORLD MARKETS AND, DESPITE THE TOKYO AGREEMENTS CONCEDING TO DEVELOPING NATION DIFFERENTIAL AND PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT IN TRADE, SIGNIFICANT TARIFF AND NON-TARIFF

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BARRIERS REMAIN TO THEIR EXPORTS. THE USG WAS ASKED TO LOOK INTO THESE BARRIERS AND TO DEVELOP A MORE FLEXIBLE GSP. MEXICAN IMPORT LIBERALIZATION (CHANGE FROM A SYSTEM OF LICENSES TO THAT OF TARIFFS) WOULD CONTINUE BUT MORE PRUDENTLY. HOWEVER, MEXICO WAS EXPERIENCING DUMPING ON SOME OF THE ITEMS WHICH HAD BEEN LIBERALIZED AND MIGHT HAVE TO RETURN TO QUANTITATIVE CONTROLS FOR THESE. MEXICO WAS CONCERNED BY GROWTH OF NTB'S AS THE DC'S REDUCED THEIR TARIFFS. GIVEN THE PROSPECTS FOR A CONTINUED CURRENT ACCOUNT DEFICIT AND MEXICAN PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT IMPORTS, MEXICO COULD NOT LIBERALIZE MUCH FURTHER. MEXICO HAD FINISHED ITS REVIEW OF OFFERS ON BTN SECTIONS 25 - 99 MADE IN THE MTN. IT WAS CONCERNED BY THE EXEMPTIONS CLAIMED AND THE EROSION OF GSP BENEFITS. MEXICAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MTN WOULD BE BASED ON THE FINAL RESULT AND GAINS IT PERCEIVED AT THE END OF THE DAY.

C. IT WAS AGREED THAT FURTHER DISCUSSION OF TRADE WOULD TAKE PLACE AT TRADE SUBGROUP MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR WOLFF.

4. TOURISM. THE MEXICAN SPOKESMAN (ORTIZ SALINAS) EX-
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PRESSED GOM CONCERN OVER THE APPARENT INCONSISTENCY BETWEEN EARLIER USG STATEMENTS ON TAX TREATMENT FOR FOREIGN CONVENTIONS AND THE PRESENT DIRECTION OF USG POLICY. THE U.S. SIDE EXPLAINED THE PRESIDENT'S GENERAL VIEWS ON "THREE-MARTINI LUNCHESES" AND GAVE A REALISTIC APPRAISAL OF THE SITUATION. MENTION WAS MADE OF POSSIBLE INCREASES IN DUTY-FEE EXEMPTIONS FOR RETURNING U.S. TOURISTS AND OF THE NEW CIVIL AIR AGREEMENT. THE U.S. SIDE EXPLAINED THAT IT WOULD BE HARD TO SAY ANYTHING DEFINITE ABOUT CONCORDE SERVICE TO MEXICO VIA THE UNITED STATES UNTIL WE KNEW IF THE CONCORDE WOULD MEET U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS.

5. MULTILATERAL ISSUES. THE DELEGATIONS HAD A DETAILED AND USEFUL EXCHANGE ON THE COMMON FUND, INCLUDING THE GREAT

DIFFICULTY THE U.S. WOULD HAVE IN GETTING CONGRESSIONAL
APPROVAL FOR ANY PROPOSAL THAT INCLUDED A "SECOND WINDOW."
(MR. BITTNER, ARA/MEX) HAS MORE DETAILS ON THIS DISCUSSION.

6. LIST OF PRINCIPAL MEMBERS OF MEXICAN DELEGATION FOLLOWS:

A. HECTOR HERNANDEZ (CO-CHAIRMAN OF DELEGATION)
SUBSECRETARY FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE

B. ALFONSO CEBREROS (CO-CHAIRMAN OF DELEGATION)
SUBSECRETARY OF PLANNING
MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND BUDGET
C. NATAN WARMAN
SUBSECRETARY FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT
MINISTRY OF PATRIMONY

D. MANUEL ARMENDARIZ
ECONOMIC ADVISOR TO THE SECRETARY
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS
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3. ANTONIO ORTIZ SALINAS
SUBSECRETARY
MINISTRY OF TOURISM

F. ABEL GARRIDO
DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR TRADE NEGOTIATIONS
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE

G. ROBERTO DAVILA GOMEZ
DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR COMMERCIAL POLICY
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE

H. ERNESTO MARCOS
DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR INDUSTRY
MINISTRY OF PATRIMONY

I. BERNARDO SEPULVEDA
DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
MINISTRY OF TREASURY

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